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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: JORDAN MEDIA REACTION ON PRESIDENT'S MIDDLE EAST SPEECH, AMERICAN PRODUCTS BOYCOTT RALLY.

SUMMARY. NEWS REPORTS ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S MIDDLE EAST SPEECH VARIED WIDELY IN THE JORDANIAN PRESS. WHILE SEMI-OFFICIAL, INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AL-RAI AND ITS SISTER NEWSPAPER CENTRIST, INFLUENTIAL AMONG THE ELITE ENGLISH DAILY JORDAN TIMES PRAISED IT AS BEING COMPATIBLE WITH JORDAN'S VISION, THE CENTER-LEFT, INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AL-DUSTOUR REPORTED "INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM" AND LOCAL REJECTION OF THE SPEECH. THE INDEPENDENT, MASS-APPEAL ARABIC DAILY AL-ARAB AL-YAWM ONLY REPORTED BARE BONES COVERAGE OF THE GOJ STATEMENT WELCOMING THE SPEECH. EDITORIAL COMMENTARIES ALSO REFLECTED CONTRASTING VIEWS ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH, FROM COMMENTS LIKE "THE WAY FORWARD" IN THE JORDAN TIMES AND "BUSH'S VIEWS MEET THE JORDANIAN VISION" IN AL-RAI, TO "BUSH ACTS AS LIEUTENANT FOR SHARON" IN AL-DUSTOUR. INDIVIDUAL COMMENTATORS WERE LARGELY CRITICAL OF THE SPEECH. DAILIES ALSO VARIED IN THEIR COVERAGE OF THE CANCELLATION OF A RALLY FOR THE BOYCOTT OF AMERICAN PRODUCTS ORGANIZED BY THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, WHICH WAS PLANNED TO TAKE PLACE YESTERDAY. END SUMMARY.

NEWS REPORTS:

JORDANIAN DAILIES ON JUNE 26 WERE DOMINATED BY REACTIONS TO PRESIDENT BUSH'S SPEECH ON THE MIDDLE EAST. THERE WAS AN UNUSUALLY LARGE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TONE ADOPTED BY SEMI-OFFICIAL, INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AL-RAI AND ITS SISTER NEWSPAPER CENTRIST, INFLUENTIAL AMONG THE ELITE ENGLISH DAILY JORDAN TIMES ON ONE HAND, AND THAT OF CENTER-LEFT, INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AL-DUSTOUR AND INDEPENDENT, MASS-APPEAL ARABIC DAILY AL-ARAB AL-YAWM ON THE OTHER.

AL-RAI AND THE JORDAN TIMES LED WITH THE HEADLINE: "JORDAN WELCOMES BUSH'S SPEECH AND CONSIDERS IT A POSITIVE STEP TOWARDS CREATING A PALESTINIAN STATE." A SECOND FRONT-PAGE STORY IN BOTH NEWSPAPERS ANNOUNCED: "BUSH'S SPEECH WELCOMED IN THE ARAB WORLD AND INTERNATIONALLY, BUT CAUSED DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE PALESTINIAN STREET." THE LEAD STORY IN BOTH NEWSPAPERS QUOTED THE STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF JORDAN, WHICH SAID THAT: "THE SPEECH WAS COMPATIBLE WITH THE JORDANIAN POSITION THAT CALLS FOR DEFINING THE OVERALL FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOLUTION AND A TIME FRAME FOR REVIVING THE PEACE PROCESS."

AL-DUSTOUR, ON THE OTHER HAND, LED WITH THE HEADLINE: "INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM OF BUSH'S CALL FOR REPLACING ARAFAT" ON TOP OF A PHOTO OF A MUTILATED BODY OF A "MARTYR" KILLED IN HEBRON YESTERDAY. IN A RARE MOVE BY THE JORDANIAN MEDIA, AL-DUSTOUR RELEGATED THE GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENT TO A SECONDARY HEADLINE IN THE THIRD STORY ON THE FRONT PAGE, WITH THE MAIN HEADLINE OF THE STORY QUOTING THE FOREIGN MINISTER AS SAYING: "BUSH'S SPEECH GOES BEYOND ISRAEL'S REQUEST FOR PHASED SOLUTIONS."

THE CANCELLATION OF THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS' RALLY FOR BOYCOTTING AMERICAN PRODUCTS, PLANNED FOR YESTERDAY, WAS TREATED WITH EQUALLY DISSIMILAR COVERAGE. AL-RAI IGNORED THE EVENT COMPLETELY, AL-DUSTOUR SAID IN A BRIEF REPORT THAT THE RALLY WAS CANCELLED, AND AL-ARAB AL-YAWM REPORTED ON THE FRONT PAGE THAT: "SECURITY AGENCIES PREVENTED THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS FROM HOLDING THE RALLY FOR THE BOYCOTT OF AMERICAN PRODUCTS."

EDITORIAL COMMENTARIES:

-- BUSH'S IDEAS MEET WITH THE JORDANIAN VISION FOR A SOLUTION TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT. THE LEADING COMMENTARY IN SEMI-OFFICIAL, INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AL-RAI ON JUNE 26 SAID: "THE JORDANIAN

WELCOME OF THE SPEECH CAME IN REACTION TO THE U.S. PRESIDENT'S COMMITMENT TO CONTINUE PLAYING A ROLE, SOMETHING THAT HIS MAJESTY KING ABDULLAH STRESSED ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION IN THE U.S. THE PRESIDENT ALSO AFFIRMED THE PALESTINIANS' RIGHT TO AN INDEPENDENT STATE IN WHICH THEY WOULD EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION. ONE SHOULD ALSO REMEMBER THAT JORDAN, DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, CALLED SETTING A TIME-FRAME FOR ENDING THE OCCUPATION, AND HERE CAME THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH TO SET A THREE-YEAR DEADLINE FOR THE END OF THE OCCUPATION, THEREBY CONFIRMING THE CORRECTNESS OF JORDAN'S VISION."

-- BUSH'S SPEECH, A STEP BACKWARDS
MOST WIDELY-READ DAILY COLUMNIST FAHED AL-FANEK WROTE IN SEMI-OFFICIAL INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AL-RAI ON JUNE 26: "PRESIDENT BUSH DID NOT UTTER WORDS SUCH AS 'OCCUPATION,' 'WITHDRAWAL,' 'THE 1967 BORDERS,' OR 'ISRAELI RAIDS ON PALESTINIAN TOWNS AND REFUGEE CAMPS.' HE CONCENTRATED ON PALESTINIAN TERRORISM WHILE IGNORING ISRAELI TERRORISM, AND HE CALLED FOR REPLACING THE PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT. IN SHORT, PRESIDENT BUSH GAVE A SPEECH IN WHICH HE WENT FURTHER THAN SHARON WOULD HAVE HAD HE WRITTEN THE SPEECH HIMSELF. AS FOR THE REFORMS THAT BUSH DEMANDED, THEY ARE WORDS OF TRUTH INTENDED TO COVER UP FOR MISCHIEF. THE TRUE INTENTION BEHIND THEM IS TO OBFUSCATE AND BUY TIME FOR SHARON TO COMPLETE HIS MISSION."

-- THE OCCUPATION GOVERNMENT WILL NOT RESPOND TO BUSH'S SPEECH.

DAILY COLUMNIST MAHMOUD AL-RIMAWI WROTE IN SEMI-OFFICIAL, INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AL-RAI ON JUNE 26: "THE PRESIDENT CALLED ON THE OCCUPATION GOVERNMENT TO WITHDRAW TO ITS POSITIONS BEFORE SEPTEMBER 28, 2000. SHARON'S GOVERNMENT WILL NOT DO SO. INSTEAD, IT WILL CONTINUE DESTROYING WHAT REMAINS OF THE PALESTINIAN INFRASTRUCTURE. THE PRESIDENT ALSO ASKED FOR A STOP TO SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY. SHARON'S GOVERNMENT WILL NOT ACCEPT TO DO SO EITHER. THE FEAR IS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WILL RESPOND TO THIS ISRAELI DISDAIN BY LAUNCHING ANOTHER ATTACK AGAINST THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY. THIS IS HOW IT HAS RESPONDED DURING THE PAST YEAR."

-- BUSH ACTS AS SHARON'S LIEUTENANT.
THE LEADING COMMENTARY OF CENTER-LEFT, INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AL-DUSTOUR ON JUNE 26 SAID: "PRESIDENT BUSH'S SPEECH WAS NOT SURPRISING EXCEPT IN THE DEGREE OF ITS BIAS FOR ISRAEL, THE FLAGRANCE OF ITS ENMITY TO THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY, AND ITS TOTAL DISMISSAL OF ARAB DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS. THIS HAS DASHED ALL THE HOPES THAT WERE PINNED ON THE U.S. HAVING A RESIDUE OF JUSTICE AND INTEGRITY. THIS SPEECH WILL ONLY CONSOLIDATE SHARON'S BELLIGERENCE, PROLONG THE OCCUPATION, AND UNLEASH ANOTHER WAVE OF ZIONIST EXTREMISM, WHICH WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE MET WITH PARALLEL PALESTINIAN REACTIONS. BY CONSEQUENCE, BUSH'S SPEECH WILL ONLY HAVE USHERED IN MORE BLOODSHED, DESTRUCTION, AND DEATH."

-- CHANCES OF IMPLEMENTING BUSH'S IDEAS.
TAHER AL-ADWAN, CHIEF EDITOR OF INDEPENDENT, MASS-APPEAL ARABIC DAILY AL-ARAB AL-YAWM WROTE ON JUNE 26: "I EXPECT THAT MOST ARAB STATES WILL ACCEPT BUSH'S IDEAS, WHETHER PUBLICLY OR IN SECRET, NOT BECAUSE THEY AGREE WITH ANYTHING IN THEM, BUT OUT OF FEAR OF A CONFRONTATION WITH WASHINGTON. IN REALITY, BUSH'S IDEAS MEET WITH SHARON'S STRATEGY IN A VITAL POINT, THAT OF CHANGING THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP AND ALL PALESTINIAN INSTITUTIONS. THIS AGREES WITH SHARON'S STRATEGY TO WITHDRAW ISRAEL'S RECOGNITION OF THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP, WHICH CAME AFTER THE OSLO ACCORD. IN ADDITION, THE PRESIDENT GAVE SHARON ADDITIONAL TIME TO CONTINUE HIS WAR AGAINST THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. AS FOR PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS, BUSH'S DISMISSAL OF THEM WILL ONLY PUSH THEM TO FURTHER RESISTANCE AND DAILY MARTYRDOM OPERATIONS, EVEN IF ARAFAT CALLS ON THEM EVERY DAY TO STOP." GNEHM